



Media Release

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LOWER STANDARDS OF HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

People with a disability in state-run or regulated accommodation are being discriminated against by not having their healthcare needs met, thus compromising the quality of their lives, according to the Community Visitors Disability Services Board in its Annual Report 2010 tabled in State Parliament today.

The report was the result of 2813 visits to 1248 disability facilities by 217 Community Visitors throughout the state.

“People with a disability often suffer from additional health issues that do not affect the general population. Lack of proper management of such complex health needs affects people with a disability in many ways, all of which affect quality of life,” Community Visitors Chair, Public Advocate Colleen Pearce said.

“Long-term mismanagement of health issues of complexity detract from a person’s capacity to enjoy life like other people do; it affects a person’s ability to make life choices, their ability to participate in the community and express normal behaviour as any person has the right to expect,”

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability* (Article 25), to which Australia is a signatory, states that people with a disability have the right to the highest attainable standard of health care without discrimination on the basis of disability.

The Community Visitors Board reported that the UN standard had not been met in many instances this year. Examples include:

- a general lack of appropriately trained staff capable of identifying complex health issues and executing the planning to deal with them
- epilepsy management plans, which are not up-to-date or have not been reviewed for years
- lack of timely referrals to appropriate specialists
- personal health care plans which have no information regarding allied health supports such as physiotherapy, speech pathology and occupational therapy
- serious delays in the provision of crucial therapy or equipment
- little access to private health insurance resulting in long wait times for essential health care and procedures
- residents with epilepsy and other serious health conditions being left without dedicated active staff support at night
- and, a medical clinic in the north-west region which charged \$200 for an annual check up, a sum which residents could not afford..

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“There is a wide variation in standards of health and wellbeing planning which directly affects the type, timeliness and appropriateness of health supports of people with a disability in the care of the State,” Ms Pearce said.

“Proper health planning is crucial in improving the quality of a person’s life because it minimises the impact of the disability on their health.”

Community Visitors call on the state government to appoint a registered nurse (Division 1) as a regional health coordinator in each region to improve health outcomes for residents, especially those with complex health care needs.

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